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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003152

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
ROBERT PALLADINO
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT TALKS ON TAIWAN
FRUIT

11. Summary: In addition to covering local politics, almost all the major Chinese-language Taipei dailies reported July 26 on President Chen Shui-bian's remarks Monday that China's opening to the sale of Taiwan fruit is a "United Front" scheme that is aimed at helping the Pan-Blue alliance win the 2008 Taiwan presidential election. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a banner headline on its front page that read: "Bian criticizes China for befriend[ing] [Taiwan] farmers and protecting the Pan-Blue Camp in order to run its United Front tactics." The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" reported on its front page: "Bian: China is helping the Pan-Blue alliance to win the presidential election." The sub-headline added: "[China] deliberately bypassed and belittled our government and announced the import of Taiwan's agricultural products. [China's] favoring and helping Lien Chan and James Soong was one hundred percent politically motivated." The centrist "China Times" and pro-unification "United Daily News" also carried similar news stories, but they appeared in their inside pages.

12. Several newspapers, especially the pro-independence ones, editorialized on the cross-strait talks on selling Taiwan fruit to China. Editorials of the pro-independence "Liberty Times," "Taiwan Daily," and the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" all echoed President Chen's remarks by calling China's move a "United Front" tactic aimed at helping the Pan-Blue Camp win Taiwan's future presidential election. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," however, said the Chen administration's obstructionist policy toward closer cross-strait ties is frustrating not only opposition parties but the administration's core supporters. End summary.

A) "[Taiwan Officials] Must Do More and Work Harder for Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] editorialized (7/26):

". China produces a variety of fruit, which is much cheaper than Taiwan's fruit, so the idea of selling Taiwan fruit to China is clearly [part of] Beijing's 'United Front' tactics. Both [Chinese President] Hu Jintao and [Chinese Premier] Wen Jiabao can hardly take good care of the 900 million farmers in China, how much time will they have to benefit Taiwan farmers? In a nutshell, all Beijing wants is just to cultivate some interested partners in central and southern Taiwan in an attempt to help the campaigning of the pro-China political forces there and to thoroughly carry out its scheme of 'restraining Taiwan via the Taiwan people.'
."

B) "China's Move to Provide Incentives to Importing Taiwan Agricultural Products Is in Reality a Secret Attempt to Help the Pan-Blue Camp to Win Taiwan's Future Presidential Elections"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 150,000] commented in an editorial (7/26):

". The Beijing government, in the wake of KMT Chairman Lien Chan's and PFP Chairman James Soong's visits to China, has placed special emphasis on encouraging the sale of Taiwan's agricultural products to China and persuading southern Taiwan farmers to visit the agricultural cooperation experimental zones in China. . These moves exactly prove that the Chinese authorities in Beijing and the Pan-Blue politicians in Taiwan share common interests with regard to the issue of selling Taiwan fruit to China. They also explain the reason why President Chen said in public that China's move to befriend southern Taiwan farms is an attempt to help the Pan-Blue Camp to win future Taiwan presidential elections.

"This newspaper agrees with Chen's viewpoint. Only by deepening the mainstream values of 'Taiwan first' and strengthening the Taiwan-centered identity can the island avoid confusion over its national identity and pull together the Taiwan people's collective will power to further resist China's united-front attacks."

C) "Sweet Fruit, Rotten Tactics"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] noted in an editorial (7/26):

". Since Taiwan does not place any restrictions on the export of agricultural products to China, the main focus of negotiations was to be the inspection and quarantine of Taiwan's farm products. But these actually fall under the scope of the government.

"Originally, the issue was a matter of reciprocity that could be resolved through negotiations by the two governments. But China has set a technical threshold and appointed its own negotiating partner. What kind of negotiation is that? China should not avoid officially-authorized Taiwanese representatives if it really wants to push for tax-free import of Taiwan's fruit.

"Since Taiwan will not send any representatives to the proposed talks in China, the duty-free import of Taiwan's fruit into China will be impossible over the short term. China may blame this on the government here, in keeping with the script written by Beijing and the KMT that aims to destroy the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) rule. The DPP surely is aware of this trick. The party should clearly explain this to the nation's farmers to let them understand the truth, so as to reduce the effectiveness of the united-front tactics being employed by China and the blue camp."

D) "Fruits Shaking DPP Base"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] wrote in an editorial (7/26):

". By offering privileges to Taiwan's fruits while at the same time refusing to deal with the DPP government, Beijing is obviously trying to drive a wedge between the government and the farmers, who are the traditional electoral support base for the pro-independence ruling party.

"For the farmers, their foremost concern is to swiftly cash in on their labor and investment. The government can subsidize, buy their harvest, or provide timely assistance, but not intervene in marketing. The Chen administration's obstructionist policy toward closer mainland ties from direct transport links to fruit exports, is frustrating not the opposition but its core supporters."

PAAL